

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 151258Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3946
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4460

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PINT, SY, LE
SUBJECT: NEW SYRIAN INITIATIVE TO PACIFY LEBANESE SITUATION

REF: BEIRUT 3085, 2879

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN
INTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH LEBANESE LEADERS, INCLUDING JUMBLATT,
KARAME AND BUTROS IN EFFORT TO BRING SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION
UNDER CONTROL AND TO ESTABLISH BASIS FOR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION.
WE KNOW OF NO PARTICULAR REASON WHY THESE EFFORTS SHOULD BE
SUCCESSFUL OTHER THAN FACT SYRIANS SEEM TO BE APPROACHING
PROBLEM MORE REALISTICALLY THAN BEFORE. WE ASSUME THIS IS
REALISM BORN OF URGENCY AS AL-ASSAD SEES APPROACH OF MIDDLE
EAST NEGOTIATIONS AND WANTS TO CONCENTRATE HIS STRENGTH TO
CONFRONT NEGOTIATING OPPONENTS. END SUMMARY.

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WM ON JULY 9, PRESIDENT ASSAD AND FONMIN KHADDAM MEN
WITH PLO OFFICIALS INCLUDING SALAH KHALAF. NO JULY 12
AND 13, WALID JUMBLATT VISITED SYRIA AND MET ABDALLAH
AL-AHMAR, BAATH ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL AND PRESIDENT
ASSAD. AND ON JULY 14, NEWSPAPER AL-THAWRA CLAIMED THAT
LEBANESE FONMIN BUTROS IS EXPECTED JULY 15 WHILE FORMER

LEBANESE PRIMIN RASHID KARAME WILL VISIT DAMASCUS JULY 16.

3. YUGOSLAV DCM DESCRIBED JULY 9 PLO MEETING TO EMBOFF AS "CORRECT" AND SAID THAT FONMIN KHADDAM GAVE PLO OFFICIALS SOME GOOD ADVICE. HE POINTED OUT THAT PALESTINIANS WERE SURROUNDED BY SYRIANS, ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIANS AND SO SHOULD AVOID BECOMING TO OBSTREPEROUS. AFTER MEETING, SALAH KHALAF, IN INTERVIEW WITH AN-NAHAR, ASID HE EXPECTED SYRIA TO TAKE FRESH INITIATIVES IN SOUTH.

4. JUMBLATT'S DISCUSSION WITH SYRIAN LIEADERS WERE CHARACTERIZED BY PRESS AS "FRANK AND FRATERNAL". WHILE DIFFERENCES SURELY REMAIN THERE HAS BEEN SOME MEETING OF MINDS ON NEXT STEPS TOWARD RESOLUTION OF LEBANESE POLITICAL CRISIS. AFTER HIS MEETING WITH ASSAD, JUMBALATT TOLD NEWSPAPER TISHRIN JULY 14 THAT HE FAVORS UPHOLDING LEGITIMACY OF PRESIDENT SARKIS AND BUILDING MODERN STATE AS DISTINCT FROM TYPE OF STATE PREVIOUSLY KNOWN. ON SAME DAY AL-BAATH FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL BY MAID KHOULI MIRRORED JUMBLATT'S VIEW CALLING FOR CENTRALIZED STATE UNDER PRESIDENT SARKIS AS OPPOSED TO POLITICAL DUALITY LEBANON PREVIOUSLY KNEW AND ADDED THAT PRESIDENT SHOULD BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE.

5. AL-BAAATH JULY 15 EXPLAINS THESE MEETINGS IN CONTEXT
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OF SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO ENERGIZE POLITICLA MOVEMENT TO SOLVE PROBLEM OF SOUTH LEBANON. AL-THAWRA, QUOTING A LEBANESE SOURCE, SAYS THAT THIS NEXT WEEK WILL WITNESS INTENSIFIED POLITICAL MOVES TO COPE WITH CONDITIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS ALONG PATH OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. AL-THAWRA SUGGESTED THAT AMONG THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS ACTIVITY WOULD BE: 1) REVIVAL OF QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE MISSION; 2) CONTAINING INCIDENTS IN SOUTH IN EFFORT TO SEPARATE "ARAB DIFFERENCES" FROM LEBANESE ISSUE; 3) DRAFTING A WORKING PAPER ON NATURE OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION; AND 4) SPEEDING UP RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANESE ARMY.

6. WE KNOW OF NO NEW CONSTELLATION OF FORCES OR BREAK-THROUGH WHICH WOULD MAKE CURRENT SYRIAN ATTEMPTS TO GET HANDLE ON SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION OR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION SUCCESSFUL. BUT APPROACHES TO JUMBLATT, KARAME AND BUTROS ARE CRETAINLY MORE REALISTIC THAN SYRIAN JUNE EXPERIMENT OF USING KAMAL SHATELA AS STALKING HORSE FOR "BROAD NOATIONAL FRONT". WHILD GREEK ORTHODOX BISHOP RAMLAWI TELLS US SYRIA HAS ABANDONED THAT STILLBORN EFFORT WE ASSUME GOVERNMENT RETAINS BASIC OBJECTIVES OF ESTABLISHING COALITION OF

POLITICAL FORCES IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER TO BACK SARKIS
IN LEBANON WHILE AT SAME TIME SEEKING WAYS OF RELEVING ITS OWN ARMED
FORCES OF LEBANESE BURDEN.

7. INTENSITY OF SYRIAN EFFORT AT THIS TIME PROBABLE
RELATED TO SPECTER OF IMMINENT MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.
UNLESS SYRIA MEETS WITH SOME SUCCESS IN LEBANON, IT MAY
GRAB HEELS ON EARLY RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS WHICH
ASSAD WILL UNDERSTANDABLY WANT TO FACE FROM POSITION OF
STRENGTH. SUCH A POSITION IS INCOMPATIBLE
WITH A FESTERING LEBANESE SITUATION AND DEEP SYRIAN MILITARY
COMMITMENT THERE.
MURPHY

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